

THE EPISTLE
Bride-Woman
COUNSELLER

BEING A
SERMON
PREACH'D AT A
WEDDING.

May the 11th, 1699, at Sherbourn, in
Dorsetshire.

1 Cor. Chap. 7. Ver. 34.
But she that is Married careth for the things of the
World, how she may please her Husband.

By JOHN SPINT.

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THE EPISTLE to the READER.

MY COURTEOUS READER,

WHEN thou hast perused this Discourse, thou wilt see Cause enough to believe me if I tell thee it was designed only for the Pulpit, not for the Press; but it hath so fallen out, that the Doctrine therein contained is so unhappily represented to the World by some ill-natur'd Females, that I am necessitated to offer it to a Publick View; by means of which, tho' I shou'd purchase the Character of a Block-head, yet I hope I shall get the advantage of convincing the World that I am not such an impudent Villain as my waspish Accusers have reported me to be. Be it known unto thee Reader, whosoever thou art, that I have not met with one Woman among all my Accusers whose Husband is able to give her the Character of a dutiful and obedient Wife. I observe also, that good Wives are no more offended with my discourse than modest Matrons are when vile Strumpets are painted in their proper Colours; the most that such have to say, is, that I might have done well to have said as much to the Men, which for their satisfaction I will promise to do, when I see this Discourse hath had that happy Success as to reform those imperious Wives, who never think their Husbands love them well, unless they will obey them too.

Upon the whole, I find 'tis Women's Guilt which makes them so uneasy, and puts them to that pain which they feel in their Consciences, for which I know no better an Anodyne than a speedy Repentance and Reformation; which if they neglect, in despite of all their loud noise and clamours, the Truths which I here publish will pursue them to Judgment, and there witness against them, not only as Traitors to their Husbands, whose Authority they usurp, but as Rebels to the Great Monarch of the World, whose Sacred Laws they impiously violate.

Farewel,

1 COR. Chap. 7. Ver. 34.

ut she that is Married, careth for the things of the World, how she may please her Husband.

THE Word *Careth*, in the Original signifieth more than ordinary Care, and implies a dividing of the Mind into divers Thoughts, casting is way, and that way, and every way, how to give it content. Finding no other Verbal Difficulties, I all leave *Words* and pass to *Things*, and shall lay the foundation of my Discourse in this Proposition.

It is a Duty incumbent on all Married Women, to be extraordinary careful to content and please their Husbands.

From which Doctrine, I shall take occasion faithfully to present the Duty of married Women to their Husbands.

Obj. And why so? (may the Women say) why could not you have pitch'd upon v. 33. and have taken occasion from thence to have told married Men their Duty to their Wives? Or, if we must be told our Duty, why could you not have come to a Composition with us, and have brought our Husbands in to have shared th us?

1. Truly I foresaw not only these, but a whole *Host* of male Objections, would be started against my Design; if Reason may take place, I hope I am able to silence them all: And here, amongst the many Reasons, which might be produc'd to justify my Attempt, I shall only offer to your Consideration these few.

1. Because the Woman's Duty is harder and more difficult than that of the Man: Precepts for Ruling and Governing are more taking, and have a more pleasing sound, than those which enjoyn Subjection and Obedience.

ence. You Women will acknowledge that Men can learn to command, and rule fast enough, which as Husbands they ought to do; but 'tis very rare to find that Women learn so fast to Submit and obey, which as Wives they ought to do: Women have need of *Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, here a Little and there a Little*; and all little enough to make them perfect in their Lesson.

2. Because Women are of weaker Capacities to learn than Men, and therefore when they have a hard and difficult Lesson, and but weak Abilities to learn it, they had need of more Help and Assistance afforded them; and so it behoves us not only to tell them their Duty in Conjunction with their Husbands, but also to teach them singly and by themselves.

3. Because that (according to the Observation which I have made) most of those Distractions and Disturbances which have attended a Married Life, and that have brought so much Reproach and Disgrace on the Honourable State, are owing to the Indiscretion and Folly, if not to the Obstinacy and Stubbornness of disobedient Wives; and I shall not scruple to affirm, that the number of those bad Husbands, which their Wives have made so, is greater by far than the Number of those whom their Wives have found so when they were first married.

4. Because the Love of a Husband does very much depend upon the Obedience of a Wife; Stubbornness and Obstinacy in a Wife may check and quench the Affections of an Husband, but are no proper Methods to Kindle and enflame themselves. When the Wife becomes pliant and yielding to her Husband's Will and Desire, she then lead him captive at her pleasure, and leaves him so fast bound in the golden Fetters of Love, that she may do even with him what she pleases. *An obedient Wife, (says one) is the likeliest Woman in the World to command her Husband:* So that, in plain Terms you are more afraid than hurt, and instead of being scrupulous of having your Duty told you, you shou-

(5)

use your utmost Diligence to learn and practise it, if ever you mean to have your Husbands loving and kind to you.

5. Because that all that pretend to, is to lay your Duty before you; and shall I therefore become your Enemy, because I am come to tell you the Truth? As for good V Vives, the Knowledge and Practise of their Duty is so comfortable and pleasant to them, that I am sure they are not listed in the number of these Objectors, and I wish, that where there is one of these there were a thousand; as for Bad ones, I am sure they have need of being told their Duty more than a little, and of this sort I wish there were none at all: And if by poor Endeavours in this Discourse, I can but be instrumental either of lessening their Number, or of preventing their Increase, I shall obtain my End. Under the shelter of these Reasons I shall adventure in the Face of all Objections to pursue my Design, which is to prosecute this Doctrine, *viz.*

That 'tis a Duty incumbent on all married Women to be extraordinary Careful to content and please their HUSBANDS, which I shall do in this Method.

1. Prove it by Reason and Argument.
2. Shew how and which way married Women must endeavour to please their Husbands.
3. Make some Improvement of it.

The Reasons of the Doctrine are such as these:

1. Because the Woman was made for the Comfort and Benefit of Man [Cor. 11. 9.] *Neither was Man created for the Woman, but the Woman for the Man;* The great End of her Creation (next the Glory of God) was, that she might be serviceable and helpful unto Man; and therefore you find, when the wise Creator was about to make the Woman, he assigns this very Reason for it, [Gen. 2. 18.] *And the Lord God said, It is not good that Man should be alone, I will make an Help meet for him.*

Now if the Woman owes her Being to the Comfort and Profit of Man, 'tis highly reasonable that she should

careful and diligent to content and please him; otherwise she doth wickedly pervert the End of her Creation.

2. Because of the Woman's Occasion the Man was ruined and undone, [1. Tim. 2. 14.] *And Adam was not deceived, the Woman being deceived was in the Transgression;* That is, Adam was not at first deceiv'd irremediately by the Serpent, but only enticed and deceived by the Woman, who was the Tempter's Agent; so as that she was both first in the Transgression, in order of Time, and also the Principle, in contributing to the Seduction of Man; therefore 'tis but fit and just, that she, who hath been so greatly instrumental of so much Mischief and Misery to Man, should be actively engaged to please and comfort him: And indeed we find that God imposed this Task upon her, as a punishment for seducing her Husband, [Gen. 3. 16.] *And thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and He shall rule over thee;* Wherein is implied, not only Subjection to him, in obeying his Commands, but it reacheth farther to the bringing under unto him the very Desires of the Heart to be regulated by him so far, that it should not be lawful for her to will or desire what she her self liked, but only what her Husband should approve and allow; even before the Fall, the Will of the Husband was to have been the Woman's *Directory*, as is evident from the foregoing Reason, her Compliance with which had been easy and pleasant; but since the Fall, Man is grown more humoursome, and hard to be pleased, and Woman less able and willing to do it; which being so thro' her own means, it was but just and righteous with God to impose a Work upon her, which her self made so hard and difficult; and therefore 'tis not the Woman's pleading, that her Husband is hard to be pleased, that will excuse her Negligence herein: This may, indeed, be a *Memento* to her of her Original Guilt, but 'twill by no means excuse her from the performance of her present Duty; nay, rather it should be a Motive of her greatest diligence. Man

in his Innocency had nothing of Morosity and Soverainness in his Nature, but had all that Affability and Sweetness of Temper as rendered him highly endeared to his Young-fellow : He was then so kind, and Good-humoured, that he required nothing at her hands, but what she could perform with delight and ease by his Command : were so full of Charms, that the Woman most hardy have offered violence to her own Inclinations, before that she could have been able to have resisted them. *He Rul'd, and she Obeys'd ; yet she did not always do as he Did, in Obeysing, Rule as well as be ruled.* But until that fatal Hour came, when the Woman seduced her Husband from his Innocency ; and then the Nature of Man was sadly chang'd, his Temper grew harsh and severe, and Humours became troublesome and turbulent, so that the Pleasing of him is now become a business that requires a great deal of Art and Skill, of Diligence and Industry ; and she that is married, divides her Mind into divers Thoughts, cast about every way, and useth variety of Methods to please her Husband : And this I believe is experienc'd Truth with most Women, which if it be, you may thank your Mother Earth for it, who, when she had gotten a good Natur'd and loving Husband, that was easy to be pleas'd, could not then be contented, but must try Practices with him, till she had spoil'd him, which prov'd fatal, not only to her, but to her Daughters also, who, if they have Husbands, and have them good too, must take a great deal of Care and Rains to make them so.

3. Because upon the doing or neglecting of this, the Happiness or Misery of a Married Life doth depend : a good Wife, (says one) should be like a Mirror which bears no Image of its own, but receives its Stamp and Image from the Face that looks into it : So should a good Wife endeavour to frame her outward Deportment, and her inward Affections according to her Husband's, to rejoice when he rejoiceth, to be sad when he mourns, to grieve and be troubled when he is offended and vexed : And would Women thus endeavour

to do, they would not only content and please their Husbands, but they would thereby open a way for the obtaining of their Husbands what they themselves do will and desire ; such Wives may be sooner tired in making their Requests, than their Husbands would be in granting them ; and their Husbands would think, that they could never do enough to gratify and oblige them. And where Matters are thus carried between Husband and Wife, the one submissive and obedient, the other respectful and kind, how happy, how comfortably do they spend their days ! But when the Wife shall act the reverse of this, and instead of being careful to oblige and please her Husband, shall upon every little occasion pout and loure, frown and fume, rail at and wrangle with her Husband, making the House too hot to hold him ; if the Husband be of a rugged and resolute Temper, and will retaliate the Affronts that are offered him, I know no place in the World so like to Hell, as that House wherein they dwell : But if the Husband be of a meek and patient Temper, the carriage and deportment of such a Wife, tho' it cannot provoke him to vent his Passion in such a stormy and tempestuous manner, yet it gives him those inward wounds of Spirit, as make his Life short and miserable : *The consents of a Wife are a continual dropping*, says the Wise-man (Prov. 9. 13.) And (faith Bishop Hopkins on the place) it is such a dropping, as will at last eat and fret thro' his very Heart, tho' it were made of Stone. One of the best Ministers that ever I knew for Piety, Learning, and Good-nature, (famous for Learned Tracts) had (faith a late Writer) an hard name, because of his Wife's Complaints : he would say, all was a little Domestick talk ; but that Domestick Talk broke his Heart, that before he died he said, ' God hath blessed me with some Parts, that I now begin to be useful in the World and must I now go out of the World, thro' the Humour of a Woman ? And many (saith he) die of the same Disease. All Evils, as Elements, are most troublesome out of their proper Places ; as Profaneness in

Ministry, whose Work it is to beat it down ; In-
ice in Judges, whose Office it is to condemn it ; and
Discourtez in a Wife, who was made to be a Comfort-
er was this that gave rise to the Proverb of Solomon [Prover-
1. 9.] *'Tis better to live in a corner of a House Top, than
with a brawling Woman in a wide House.* 'Tis much more
desirable to live poorly and solitary in the open Air,
exposed to all the Injuries of the Weather, nay to thrust
into a little corner on the Top of the House, than to
have a spacious Habitation, and numerous Family, go-
vernd by a contentious Wife, whose perpetual Scold-
ing and Brawling within doors, upon the least Occasion
is more intolerable than the Thunder and Lightning
and blustering Winds, which may molest him without.
*Tis an hundred pities (says Mr. Swynnoch) that the Tongues
of such Shrews bwoe not as many Blister as their Jaws have
Teeth, and 'tis never better with their Husbands than when
they are boorse.* To conclude this Head, whilst the good
Wife that is careful to oblige her Husband, makes
both him and her self happy ; the impious, clamorous
and turbulent Wife, that at every word spits Passion
and Poison, is a Tortment and Vexation to her
self, and a pernicious Plague to her Husband.

2. I come now in the Second place, to shew how, and
which way, married Women must endeavour to please
their Husbands.

And here there are three things they ought to do.

1. To Love
2. To Honour
3. To Obey

All which you do solemnly Covenant and Engage be-
fore God, Angels, and Men, when your Nuptial Rites
are perform'd. I have heard some Women say indeed,
that they never did, nor would say those Words after
the Minister ; but I think then, those Ministers were
very remiss in their Office ; and had I been to have offi-
ciated, those Women should have been content to have
stay'd for Husbands till they had been willing to have
spoken out, *Love, Honour, and Obey* ; which are Dut-
ies

ties, the performance of which is absolutely necessary to maintain both the Honour and Happiness of a Married State, and is the only proper Method that Women can take to please their Husbands, as I shall shew more particularly.

First. Every married Woman, in order to please her Husband, ought to love him: Let every Woman love her Husband, as the chiefest and best for her of Ten Thousands; for whose sake she can forget her own People, and her Father's Family, with whose Company and Conversie she can be contented and pleased; should all the VVorld besides be annihilated; and though even Nature does teach a VVoman to love her Husband, yet God does also enjoin it, [Tit. 2. 4.] That they may teach the young Women to be sober, and to love their Husbands, &c. Partly (saith one) because some Women have put off Nature, and are become wild, without Natural Affection; and partly because God would have the Wife's Love to her Husband to proceed not so much from an Instinct of Nature, as from Obedience to Scripture. And the Apostles confines this precept to Young VVomen too, thereby suggesting to us, that 'tis the Duty of a VVoman, newly married especially, to use all means to endear her Husband to her self, and her self to her Husband; and carefully to avoid all Occasion of Differences with her Husband, at her first Entrance into that State. Agreeable to which, I remember, Plutarch, amongst his *Conjugal Preceps*, hath this for one, viz. That it behoves those People that are newly married, to avoid the first Occasion of Discord and Dissention, considering that Vessels newly formed and subject to be bruised, and put out of shape by many slight accidents; but when the Materials come to be settled and hardened by Time, nor Fire, nor Sword will hardly prejudice the Solid Substance. 'Tis a common foolish Practice of young Women, during the Time of Courtship, to use all the Arts and Methods they can contrive or devise, to charm their Lovers and captivate the Affections of those who make their Addresses to them; you may read, *Come love me in the*

pleasantness

pleasantry of their Looks, in the neatness of their Dress, in the Discretion of their Words, in the Amiability of their Carriage and Deportment; but when they are no sooner married, but they grow as remiss and more careless in their Endeavours to please their Husbands, as before they were zealous in arting their Charms: Now their pleasant Smiles are turn'd into Frowns, the neatness of their Dress into Sluttrey. She who opened her Mouth with Wisdom, in whose Tongue was the Law of Kindness, now speaks unadvisedly with her Lips, and carries her self so disrespectful towards her Husband, and, as if she studied how to disoblige him, and to alienate his Affections from her; by which means many times Women make themselves to become the Wives of Madmen and Sots; whereas had they been as careful after their Marriage to have pleas'd their Husbands, as they were before, they might have made their Husbands happy, and themselves too; and had they had a due Conjugal Love, which they ought to have had, they would have done it; for Love is an Affection that will render Persons active and diligent to content and please those who are beloved by them; and when the Wife has so much Love for her new Husband, as to make her careful to oblige, and fearful to offend him, in process of time she will soon engage his Affections to her, that she may defy the World to alienate them from her. When two Boards are first glued together, a small matter will loosen them; but if carefully look'd to till they are well fastened, and the Glue be hardened, will not be an easy matter to disjoint or sever them.

Secondly, Married Women, in order to please their Husbands, ought to honour them. The Persian Ladies have the resemblance of a Foot worn on the top of their Bonnets, in token that the height of their Glory, Top and all, does stoop to their Husbands Feet. And the Honour which is due from the Wife to the Husband, is either,

First, Internal, or

Secondly

Secondly, External.

First, Internal. And this is when she cherisheth a high Esteem of him in her Mind, when she thinks of him as one whom God hath appointed and ordained to be her Superior and Head. The *Apostle*, (1. Cor. 1. 3.) calls the VVoman *the Glory of the Man*, and the man, as one thinks, for this Reason, because 'tis an high Honour to him, that so Excellent a Creature as a VVoman is should be his Inferior: Surely then a VVoman that harboureth mean and contemptuous Thoughts of her Husband, is her Husband's Shame and Disgrace: and tho' VVomen may think, that their Thoughts are free, that they are at Liberty to think as they please, yet let them know, that the Heart-searching God takes Cognizance of their Thoughts, and is very much displeased when he finds any to be such as are beneath the Dignity and Excellency of the Husband. If *Micah* displeth *David* in her Heart, God makes his Curse to fall upon her; and tho' she dishonour her Husband secretly in her Thought, God makes her a publick Example of his Displeasure, by punishing her with Barrenness which in those days made a VVoman very contemptible; and therefore you find, that when *Elizabeth* had brought forth a Child, she triumphs in it, and says, *God hath taken away my reproach*, [Luke 1. 25.] for which see give this Reason: The *Messias* being promised to come of the Race of the *Jews*, every teeming VVoman had the hopes of being the Parent or proparent at least of him. But there is.

Secondly, External Honour: which is when that high Esteem which the VVoman hath of her Husband, is professed or declared either in VVords or Actions, giving those Titles which may bespeak the Dignity and Excellency of his Person: So *Sarab* called her Husband *Lord*, and is commended for it, as being a fit Pattern for other VVomen to imitate, [1. Pet. 3. 6.] 'Tis Custom more common than comely, for VVomen to call their Husbands by their Christian Names, as

eth a
aks of *John*, and our *Thomas*; &c. as if they esteemed them
ined no higher a rate than their very Servants that attend
or. them; nay, it may be they will call them by reproach-
d the Names, such as *Fool*, *Sloven*, *Clown*, *Sot*, &c. and
n high that they have to say for their Vindication, I know
VVo not; but if words are thoughts Interpreters, we may
'omararewdly Gues what it is they aim at. Those VVo-
ights of men who will not condescend to give their Husband the
grace Title of *Lord* and *Master*, it is to be feared will not seru-
hists as ple in little time to usurp that Authority which that Ti-
pleasle doth imply; and the Husband may quickly expe-
d take rience what it is to be under the Discipline of the *Apron*.
The VWoman is oblig'd to honour her Husband by her
Actions: Her deportment and carriage, in all that she
bal doth, should be such, as may evidence the Honourable
to fa Opinion she has of him, as her *Lord* and *Head*; and tri-
ecretly this will much facilitate the Performance of the next
Duty you are bound to, which is,

*T*hirdly, to obey them: And however light Women
may make of this, yet I know not of any duty belonging
Men or VWomen, in the whole Book of God, that is
urged with more Vehemency, or pressed with stron-
ger or more cogent Reasons than this is. Subjection and
Obedience to their Husbands is required from VVives,
as absolutely and peremptorily as unto Christ himself,
[*Ephes. 5. 22.*] *Wives submit to your Husbands, as unto*
the Lord; and is extended to all the Husband's commands,
Ver. 24. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so
should be Wives to their Husbands, in Every thing.

Obj. But what if an Husband commands the Wife to
do that which is sinful?

Ans. By *Every thing* in the Text, is meant all that
comes within the compass of his Authority to command;
and certainly God never gave to any Man Authority to
command that which is contradictory to his own Laws;
excepting this, or the Impossibility of the thing com-
manded to be done. both God and Nature hath given
the Husband Authority to Command, and the
Wife

Wife is bound to obey, however unnecessary or unfit she may think it to be: Otherwise (says Bishop Hopkins) when the Apostle commands Wives to be subject to their Husbands in Every thing, it would signify no more than Every thing which they think fit. And this certainly is no greater a Subjection than every Husband will readily yield to his Wife, and falls infinitely short of the Apostle's Intent, who requires the Subjection of the Wife to the Husband in Every thing, as the Church is subject unto Christ, which certainly is not in every thing she thinks fit; neither ought she to take upon her to Judge or Reject his Laws, but to fulfil them: And tho' this Duty may seem, on the first View, to be difficult, yet in conjunction with the two former, it will become easie and pleasant. Love your Husbands as you ought, and you will not refuse to honour them; if you love and honour them, you will not scruple to obey them; and if you love, honour, and obey them, you will then do what becomes good Wives, and indeed what is, or should be at least sufficient to please your Husbands. And therefore, for a Conclusion of what I have to say to you Married Women, let this be your *Motto*, and let it be woven with threds of Gold in the Ornaments of your Heads, *viz.* *LOVE, HONOUR, and OBEY*, and carry it accordingly in your Practices towards your Husbands, and I am perswaded that you'll find as great a scarcity of bad Husbands *then*, as there is of good Wives *now*. I come now to the Improvement of this Doctrine, which invites me to apply my self to you Men, and that too both to the Married and Un-married.

First, To you that are single and unmarried, you may from this Doctrine learn how great a Friend Religion is to the Comfort and Happiness of Man in this Life, in the Institution whereof God hath not only wisely consulted the Interest of his own Honour and Glory, but hath graciously condescended to adapt its Precepts to the Comfort and Happiness of Man in every State and

Condition of Life; you are now single, but it may be you have designs of altering your condition by Marriage; and if you do, God hath given such Laws for your Wife to observe, as will, if duly regarded, make an *Help-meet* for you: and such a Wife it behoves you to choose, if ever you would be happy in that State: you may marry a carnal and graceless Wife, void of the fear of God, she will perhaps scoff at all that I have said, and will be careful for nothing but to please her self, and satisfy her own wild and extravagant Inclination; but you *Marry in the Lord*, i. e. if you marry a Wife that truly fears God, and lives in an habitual obedience to his Commands, she will make conscience of loving, hating, and obeying, and be extraordinary careful to please you in all things.

Secondly, To you who are Married: You have heard how great an Obligation is lain on your Wives, to love, honour and obey you, and to endeavour to please you in all things; remember that their Duty is hard, the Vertue of that Sex is great, and therefore beware of making their task more difficult than necessity doth require, than their Nature will bear; tho' 'tis true they are in affection, yet still remember they are part of your bodies, and therefore let your Authority be united with love, as your love must be governing love, so let your commands be loving commands. In the same Chapter, where the Wife is commanded to be subject to Husband, as the Church is to Christ, the Husband is commanded to love his Wife, as Christ loved the Church; which one will have to be expressed in these four Particulars;

First, by bearing with and pardoning her weakness.

Secondly, By being willing to submit to many Inconveniences for her sake.

Thirdly, by interposing your self betwixt her dangers.

Fourthly, By endeavouring to promote her Spiritual Good and Welfare.

But I must forbear enlargement, least, that, by enlarging the memories of the Women, I should cause you to forget their Duty which has been set before them.

F I N I S.

Given at the British Museum, from Edward S. Steiner,
March 22, 1916.